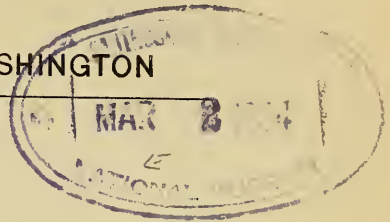


PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON



AN APPARENTLY NEW SCARAB BEETLE (COLEOPTERA) NOW ESTABLISHED AT CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA.

BY EDWARD A. CHAPIN.

In 1922, specimens of an unknown scarab related to *Plectris pexa* (Germ.) were captured at Charleston, S. C., and sent to the National Museum for identification. None came in between 1922 and 1930, although an attempt was made in 1928 to secure information as to the economic importance of the insect. Only negative evidence was available, to the effect that no additional complaints had come to the attention of the Charleston Museum staff. A few specimens taken in 1930 and 1932 and many in 1933 resulted in a field investigation by the writer early in June, 1933. Through the kind aid of the staff of the Charleston Museum, to whom very sincere thanks are extended, a few facts concerning the life history of the species were ascertained.

While its natural habitat is unknown, the beetle is presumably indigenous to northern South America, for the genus *Plectris* and other closely related genera have their centers of distribution in that region. The life cycle is apparently one year. During the early part of June only a few first-instar larvae and no larvae of a later stage could be found. Two females, one of which was engaged in depositing eggs, were taken from beneath lawn grass at a depth of 11 inches. When found, this latter female had deposited at least 14 eggs, all in her immediate vicinity. No females were captured above ground. At dusk the males come out of the turf and fly in great numbers and at a high rate of speed back and forth over the turf, rarely higher than 18 inches above ground. These males disappear after 15 to 20 minutes and males are not seen again in flight until the next evening. On the morning after an evening when a heavy flight had been observed,

many individuals of the wasp *Scolia nobilitata* Fab. were seen flying over the same area.

Plectris aliena, n. sp.

Similar in size and general appearance to *Philochlaenia maculicollis* Arrow. Castaneous to yellowish brown above, underparts and legs paler. Clypeus deeply concave, the middle of anterior margin straight, sides broadly rounded, surface coarsely, densely, and asperately punctured. Clypeo-frontal suture distinct. Frons slightly convex, more finely and very densely punctured. Both clypeus and frons closely set with rather short, pale, bristle-like hairs, which become longer and more densely placed posteriorly. Antenna ten-segmented, the first segment strongly claviform, the second rotund, the third half again as long as the fourth, the eighth to tenth forming a club which, in the male, is about twice as long as the first segment, and in the female, a little longer than the first segment. Maxillary palpus slender, the terminal segment as long as the second and third antennal segments together. Labial palpus very short, the terminal segment about one third as long as terminal segment of maxillary palpus, top-shaped, with apex acuminate, almost mucronate.

Pronotum not quite twice as broad as long, lateral margins with, anterior and basal margins without, bead, moderately strongly convex, surface a little more finely and much more sparsely punctured than clypeus, vestiture about like that of clypeus. Lateral margins nearly parallel behind the middle, strongly convergent before middle, basal angles broadly rounded, anterior angles subacute. Scutellum ogival with apex rounded, rather densely clothed with fine, pale hair. Elytra with sutural and lateral margins slightly tumid and each with four indistinct costae, of which two are discal, one humeral, and one infrahumeral. Surface distinctly uneven, with fine and not very densely placed punctures, a scale-like hair arising from each puncture. Pygidium finely and sparsely punctured, with sparse vestiture. Under parts, especially of thorax, sparsely punctured and clad with moderately long, soft hair. Anterior tibia tridentate, the basal tooth more prominent in the female. Claws divergent and dissimilar, the outer one longer and stouter than inner, both split near apex.

Length of holotype male, 12.3 mm., of allotype female 13 mm.; extreme measurements observed, 10.8 mm. and 13.5 mm. (both males).

Type, allotype, and paratypes.—U. S. N. M. Cat. No. 50115.

Locality (present known distribution).—Charleston, South Carolina, in lawns (probably introduced from South America).

This species is described from a series of 134 specimens, most of which were collected between June 5 and 9, 1933. The earliest date of collection is May 19, the latest about July 1. Specimens have been submitted to Mr. G. J. Arrow of the British Museum and Dr. Heinrich Kuntzen of the Berlin University Museum. Neither recognizes the species as having been described. Thanks are extended to both for their kind aid.

It seems impossible at the present time to untangle the synonymy presented by the genera *Plectris* Serville 1828 and *Philochlaenia* Blanchard

1850. Both names have been used for the group to which the present species belongs.

According to the strict application of the International Code, the name *Philochlaenia* was not available for use in this group in 1850, for it had already been published in connection with a valid specific name in 1834-35 by Dejean. Since the discrepancies that exist between the present species and the published information concerning the type species of *Plectris* are slight and since *Philochlaenia* does not appear available, the generic name *Plectris* is selected.